

Dear Ian Shanahan,

Please find below the questions that I mentioned to you in my previous correspondence. This information will be used for a post graduate essay, and PhD submission for my course at *Bath Spa University*, Bath, England. I request permission from your good self to use this information on this basis only. If any subsequent publication arises, I will also in the first instance contact you to obtain any prior permissions relating to copy write. Please let me express how much of a great honour it is to correspond with you, thank you for your time, your response has been highly valued and appreciated – God bless you.

All permission granted!

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**1. With specific reference to the works *Zodiac* for amplified recorder and other instruments, *Lines of Light* for recorder, synthesizer and percussion, and *Helical Ribbon* what were your intentions when writing these pieces?**

*My intention, as always, was simply to create the best possible pieces I was capable of composing, within each piece's commission constraints! Helical Ribbon was supposed to fit onto a single score-page, the manuscript itself being a prize in the 1990 Sounds Australian Award. (It is also part of a set of five etudes, each focussing on a particular aspect of recorder technique – in this case, multiphonics – and is intended for somewhat advanced students.) The other two pieces were both commissioned by the new-music group australYSIS, whose repertoire at the time showcased music with embedded improvisational elements, i.e. compositions for improvisers – “comprovisations”. Hence they both include carefully prescribed parameters within which the performers may spontaneously extemporize on the provided material.*

**2. What were your influences musically or otherwise when writing these pieces?**

*For Zodiac, no specific musical influences were consciously drawn upon, although I was well aware of precursors that engaged the systematic permutational technique which governs its pitch organization. Its main paramusical impetus was astronomical phenomena – celestial cyclicity. As for Lines of Light, it too is informed by astronomy and physics (solar spectra: Fraunhofer lines' relative wavelengths determine its proportional structure, in combination with the abovementioned permutational technique, this time applied to duration across at least two architectonic levels). Helical Ribbon deliberately alludes to the genre of “funk” in general, and is a more specific ‘nod of respect’ towards my dear friend and colleague Michael Smetanin. Indeed, one bar of Helical Ribbon quotes a rhythm from Michael's composition Ladder of Escape (for bass and contrabass clarinets). My Programme Notes provide more expansive answers!*

**3. What type of harmonic/melodic language do you use in these works?**

*My own! Notice that one thing which features in each piece is the use of microtones.*

**4. In terms of performance practice how much freedom do you give the performer to express his/her intentions in these works? What are the defined parameters in these works?**

*In Helical Ribbon, very little. (I would always trust that a performer's intention was to transparently articulate that of the composer as embodied by the music's score and associated artefacts, without any distortion or suppression being wrought by their own ego.) The other works both feature improvisation within carefully defined limits. (Consult their scores, and the relevant subsections [1.2.7 & 1.2.8] from Chapter 1 of my PhD.) In Lines of Light, the degree of freedom is itself a discrete compositional parameter that proceeds along a trajectory from considerable licence at the start to none whatsoever in its final section.*

**5. To what extent is indeterminacy or aleatoricism present in any of these works?**

*See the answer to Question 4.*

**6. What type of instructions/introductory exposition do you give to explain your music in these pieces? Does verbal instruction also come into the equation or collaboration with the performer?**

*In order to make my composerly intentions as clear and unambiguous as possible, I am in the habit of providing extremely detailed technical prefaces, as well as programme annotations, to each of my scores. Verbal instructions and performer collaboration are integral to my compositional modus operandi. (My PhD includes a subsection [1.2.6] devoted to verbal instructions!)*

**7. How rhythmically complex are these pieces?**

*In Zodiac, rhythm as such is not indicated at all! Lines of Light is notated mostly in time-space notation (after its first two sections): it isn't particularly complex at the foreground level, but beyond that, proportional self-similarity and systematic permutations are applied architectonically to durations. Helical Ribbon's rhythmic language pretty much matches that found within the funk genre, wherein syncopation is quite sophisticated by comparison with other vernacular musics (besides jazz).*

**8. How much internal processing is required by the performer in these works, and do you feel that your music makes your musical intentions clear?**

*Certainly in the two pieces written for austraLYSIS, much of the performers' internal processing is geared towards spontaneous invention stemming from the notated material. As for the second part of your question, I surely hope that my musical intentions are always crystal clear! I definitely go to considerable trouble in this regard by including programme annotations and technical prefaces in the front of every one of my scores, as well as providing much specificity in the musical notation itself (to the extent that I feel it's needed).*

**9. Does spatIALIZATION play a part in any of these works? To what extent is this apparent in Zodiac and Lines of Light in particular?**

*Not particularly – although Lines of Light does include a diagram showing the instrumental layout, including the placement of loudspeakers.*

**10. Are you aware of any graphical scores for solo recorder works, (unaccompanied, or accompanied), what issues do such scores bring to the actual realization of music and particularly performance practice?**

*Yes: Louis Andriessen's Paintings; various pieces by Michael Vetter; and Sylvano Bussotti's RARA (dolce) do spring to mind. Such so-called 'scores' put all of the creative burden upon the performer, so I do not regard them as 'compositions' per se, rather as visual stimuli for improvisation.*

**11. With relation to question 10 – what issues does over prescriptive notational styles, and even minimalist scores produce in terms of performance practice.**

*I am unsure how to answer this question. Personally, I don't believe that there is any such thing as an "overprescriptive notational style". In new music, there is no real 'common performance practice' any more: it has fragmented to the atomic level of the individual composer, even from one piece to the next! This accounts for the high level of notational and verbal detail in some scores, which thereby define their own performance practice.*

**12. Do any of the extended techniques, specific fingering patterns you use in the works listed at question one come from your works The Avant Garde Recorder: A Preliminary Study of Some Developments in Alto Recorder Playing Techniques and Their Notation or Recorder Unlimited – A Preliminary Study of Alto Recorder's Multiphonic Resources?**

*I didn't have these texts readily to hand while composing those compositions. There may well be some overlap between them and the examples in my these, but if so, it's unpremeditated...*

**13. What are your primary intentions with the two works listed in question 12?**

*Simply to educate recorder players and composers in regard to the vast technical and timbral possibilities the recorder embodies, with the hope of creating significant new repertoire that exploits the instrument's hitherto neglected resources.*

**14. On which academic websites may these two works be examined or purchased?**

*None that I know of – although the website of the Australian composer Derek Strahan does include some text from The Avant-Garde Recorder.*

**15. To what extent do you think you have advanced the expressive qualities, technical resources of the recorder in terms of extended techniques from these two major works?**

*I think that should be left for others, as well as posterity, to judge.*

**16. To what extent have these two volumes served as inspiration for the composition of new contemporary solo recorder works in general? (unaccompanied and accompanied solo works).**

*It's difficult for me to say. Over the years, I have made copies of them for various composers and recorder players who presumably have made use of them – e.g. Chris Dench (composer); Genevieve Lacey (recorder player).*

**17. Is there any overlap between your work in *The Avant Garde Recorder: A Preliminary Study of Some Developments in Alto Recorder Playing Techniques and Their Notation* or *Recorder Unlimited* and *A Preliminary Study of Alto Recorder's Multiphonic Resources*? with Michael Vetter's *Flauto Dolce Ed Acerbo*, and how similar or dissimilar are these works?**

*Very little overlap indeed! My own work is far more detailed and, unlike that of Vetter, does not 'resolve' the pitches of multiphonic components to the nearest semitone. The Avant-Garde Recorder, in its opening chapters, provides a detailed comparison between itself and Vetter's seminal work. Recorder Unlimited investigates the subject of recorder multiphonics in much greater depth, including combinations of multiphonics with other recorder techniques.*

**18. How important is the aesthetic look of your music, and does it play a part in the functionality of actual performance?**

*It is quite important! I normally prefer to write my scores 'by hand' because it gives them a unique, personal 'look'; in any case, many of them are probably beyond the capabilities of engraving software like Finale or Sibelius. There is a practical dimension to this too: often, my scores include a considerable amount of notational detail, so I carefully plan their layout and execute their copying as neatly as possible in order to minimize extramusical difficulties for the performers.*

**19. What value judgement do you place on highly complex music or even simplistic music in terms of performance practice and musical expression?**

*As a composer, performer or audient, I have no time or regard whatsoever for simplistic music (as distinct from "simple" music). Rather, I highly value musical richness, intelligence and complexity, which thereby totally precludes any engagement on my part with contemporary pop- and rock musics, minimalism of any kind, or the so-called 'new simplicity'.*

**20. Does your work conform to any type of national identity? Is there a nationalistic type of Australian recorder music?**

*National identity? No! Indeed, since anti-intellectualism is a great Australian 'sport', I would say that my work is decidedly un-Australian! As for Australian recorder music in particular, I do not detect any distinctive nationalistic type.*

**21. What are the technical challenges of performing *Zodiac* for amplified recorder and other instruments, *Lines of Light* for recorder, synthesizer and percussion, and *Helical Ribbon*, and how can this be overcome in performance?**

*The former pair require improvisational skills, as well as more than a passing familiarity with post-1960 recorder techniques. They also demand careful listening by all players as well as sensitivity to cueing and coordination. Helical Ribbon calls for a good feel for funk, fingering dexterity, and competence in playing multiphonics. All of these challenges may be overcome through practice and critical listening.*

**22. How much expressivity do you feel these works and your other solo recorder works place upon the recorder as a 'musical instrument'?**

*Quite a lot, I think.*

**23. How do you rate other Australian recorder composers, are there any notable composers for solo unaccompanied and accompanied recorder works?**

*To be honest, I rarely think about other Australian recorder composers (apart from those who have written for me!). One Australian whose work in this field I think is important is Benjamin Thorn, himself a fine recorder player.*

**24. What are your favourite contemporary solo recorder works (unaccompanied and accompanied) since 1960 until the present, and how aware are you of other national schools of composers in terms of contemporary repertoire for solo recorder?**

*I don't really have any favourite works, but there are many that I do consider to be historically pivotal milestones – those by Baur, Vetter, Berio, Shinohara, etc.*

**25. What aspects of performance practice and tradition are most important in your works for solo recorder?**

*I tend to compose in somewhat of an 'historical vacuum' (while acknowledging that this is impossible to achieve in practice), treating the instrument as a tabula rasa – although I am never unaware of the recorder's heavy repertorial burden and iconography. I should add that my research into post-1960 recorder techniques – and into 'extended techniques' in general! – was initially inspired by my listening to the Japanese shakuhachi for the first time (in 1981, as I recall): this experience was a world-shaking epiphany that impelled me to search for technical and musical analogies between the recorder and the shakuhachi.*

**26. Are you aware of how many, roughly speaking, there are of solo recorder works (unaccompanied, or accompanied) in Australian recorder music? (Currently less than twenty solo alto unaccompanied works on the *Australian Music Centre Website*). Could access to this information be provided elsewhere in your expert opinion?**

*In 1985, I made a catalogue of such works. Of course, it is now well and truly out-of-date! Otherwise, I rely upon the Australian Music Centre [AMC]. There are now, thankfully, several Australian recorder players commissioning pieces from local composers, the most active at present being Genevieve Lacey and Alicia Crossley (a bass recorder specialist). Such recorder players may well be able to augment the AMC's catalogue of such recorder works.*

**27. Is there a national recorder magazine, journal or periodicals that discuss solo unaccompanied and accompanied recorder works?**

*None that I am aware of at present. In the past, the Victorian Recorder Guild published a substantial journal (the name of which eludes me, alas).*

**28. As part of modernism and the postmodern divide, what have been the implications upon solo contemporary recorder music (accompanied and unaccompanied) upon performance practice, tradition and musical styles and genres in Australia since 1960?**

*Considering the ever-fracturing evolutionary paths of Western art-music over the past 50 years or so, I can discern no specific feature that distinguishes Australian recorder music from the general directions of those paths – apart from the observation that during that period, a growing corpus of professional-standard recorder players who are passionate about new music has emerged in this country.*

**29. What is the defining feature of your neo-tonal landscapes for any of your solo recorder works?**

*My music does not embrace any “neo-tonal landscapes”, as far as I am aware – with the deliberate exception of my little study Cathy’s Song, which engages a set of interlocking modes the tonality of which shifts with each mode. Stylistically, it deliberately references the music of Ross Edwards, as its programme annotation elucidates.*

**30. What compositional processes do you go through to create such innovative and highly original music as your own?**

*The minutiae of my compositional praxis vary from one piece to the next; however, some general observations can be made. Once my instrumentation has been decided upon, usually after much deliberation, I immerse myself into dedicated research – often in conjunction with my performers – regarding each instrument’s technical capabilities, in order to establish their timbral palette’s limits and ‘cartography’. This often results in a compendious accumulation of technical ‘charts’ as part of my sketch material. Such research may even include consideration of an instrument’s semiology and iconography (very pertinent in the case of the recorder)!*

*Moreover, my music is often underpinned and motivated by a complex network of extramusical concepts which become the music’s very entelechy or ‘DNA’: I fabricate structures wherein these ideas resonate literally throughout all morphological strata. For instance, the entelechy of my alto flute solo Dimensiones Paradisi is a ‘mandala’ characterising the ground-plan of Heaven (according to John Michell’s fascinating book The Dimensions of Paradise), for which the geometric relationships between its polygonal and circular constituents act as structural determinants. Similarly, Lines of Light’s ‘structural force-field’ is based upon the relative wavelengths of the Fraunhofer lines – literally, ‘lines of (non)light’ – within our Sun’s observable spectrum. My training in higher mathematics has definitely proven beneficial in giving me the ability to construct isomorphic correspondences between physical or abstract phenomena and my music.*

**31. Is it possible to establish any stylistic precedents in any contemporary solo Australian recorder works since 1960? Could these in any way be related to performance practice?**

*Very little, if any, such music has been created within a cultural vacuum, so that “stylistic precedents” should not be too difficult to detect. The performance practices of such precedents I imagine would map quite easily onto their Australian offshoots.*

**32. How do you feel the problems of rhythmic complexity and harmonic density can be overcome in graphical notation, or even in your own work for solo recorder, what are the possible implications upon performance practice?**

*Aside from the pictorial representation of pre-recorded electroacoustic material (in order to assist the performer with coordination), "graphic notation" is, in my opinion, a compositional cop-out that overcomes absolutely nothing. It is merely a visual stimulus for improvisation. In my own work, I notate my music in the optimal way so as to articulate my (often intellectually byzantine) compositional intent. In this regard, I never see "rhythmic complexity and harmonic density" as a "problem"; instead, it is usually a virtue!*

**33. Are you aware of any other treatise, PhD Research material that deal with multiphonics, extended techniques, or contemporary performance practice in relation to solo recorder music?**

*These are matters with which I frankly have not kept myself up-to-date over the last 20 years or so, but my three theses' bibliographies do include many such documents.*

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Thank you for your time and expert knowledge,

Roger Smith – Bath Spa University.